

why
literacy \equiv europe?
enhancing
competencies
of citizens in
the 21st century

literacy

Organized by:

UNESCO Institute for Education
Agence National de Lutte Contre L'illettrisme
Commission Nationale Française pour l'UNESCO

With the participation of:

European Association for the Education of Adults

With support from:

European Union
French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Conseil général du Rhône
UNESCO Institut pour l'UNESCO Trace Elément
Ecole National Superior de Sciences



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Feldbrunnenstrasse 58
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ISBN 92-820-1146-1

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Foreword

For UNESCO literacy is a concern for all in both developed and developing regions. The persisting large core of about 860 million illiterate population, majority of them women, are to be found mainly in the developing countries. Hence, for many European governments, improving literacy is associated with providing development assistance to regions like Africa and Asia where most of those who cannot read or write live and work. Like many other goals of Education for All (EFA), literacy among the Europeans is assumed to be achieved and therefore is no longer a priority concern for many government agencies in the Region.

Almost twenty years ago, at the 1986 UNESCO-organized European meeting on The Prevention of Functional Illiteracy and the Integration of the Youth in the World of Work in Hamburg, Germany, the participants concluded that literacy needs to be addressed in the region. Contrary to the commonly held assumption that illiteracy is only affecting minority groups in Europe like the Romas and the immigrants, the experts at that meeting explained that there is a growing number among the mainstream population who either had weak foundations in literacy from school or who are not able to use their literacy skills learned from schools and are therefore not able to retain such skills. Some governments responded to such findings by undertaking studies to find out the extent of the problem while a few broadened their literacy programs to cover more groups other than the minorities. The series of International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and subsequently

ALL (Adult Literacy & Life Skills Survey) also unraveled the numbers and nuances of the problem of literacy and competencies the region was facing. Yet today, even as the EU Lisbon Strategy of making the region the competitive knowledge society hinges on basic skills like literacy, there is still no national strategy for many countries nor is there a concerted effort at the regional level to systematically address this.

It is in this context that the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE), the Agence Nationale de Lutte Contre L'Illettrisme (ANLCI), and the UNESCO French National Commission, organized this Regional Meeting on "Literacy and the Promotion of Citizenship: The Challenge of Learning" in Lyon, France from April 2-5, 2005. Supported by the European Union, with the participation of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), this meeting brought together 145 representatives of government, research institutes and universities, non-government organizations and public and private providers of literacy.

Coming from 38 countries of what is considered the European region in UNESCO (i.e. Europe, Canada, Israel and USA), the participants strongly argued that literacy should be a priority learning concern not only of developing countries but also of countries in Europe where millions of people do not have the basic competencies to tackle the demands of everyday life. Many of them are left at the margins of the knowledge society that the European Union envisioned and hopes to achieve with its Lisbon Agenda. For UNESCO this meeting is an excellent opportunity not only to reiterate the importance of addressing literacy in a systematic and comprehensive way in the region but also to review the pertinent policies and practices, and to share these with other parts of the world. Given the declaration of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003- 2012), the UNESCO Institute of Education considers this meeting as an important contribution in raising the awareness of governments and other

stakeholders on the urgency of addressing key issues like conceptualizing literacy, research and measurement, training of trainers, networking and partnerships, and institutional arrangements in tackling literacy. We believe that while the map of literacy in Europe differs from that of other regions, identifying markers in the Region can also contribute in clearing the roads and pathways to literacy in other regions. Vice versa, we also believe that other regions have so much to offer Europe in navigating the complex pathways, roads and highways of literacy towards the Learning Societies for All in the Twenty-first Century.

This programme aimed not only at crafting a broad agenda for all countries in the UNESCO European region towards the Education for All (EFA) and UNLD goals but also at creating awareness for a sustained effort to support developing countries overcome the daunting challenge of creating literate societies. It is only through this shared vision and commitment that we can create a literate, equitable, democratic world with free and critical citizens learning throughout life.

Adama Ouane
Director

Background

In 1986, UNESCO organized a meeting of specialists in Europe on The Prevention of Functional Illiteracy and the Integration of the Youth in the World of Work in Hamburg, Germany. Attended by 39 participants from 23 countries, the Meeting noted significant illiteracy levels in the Region; the lack of a shared understanding of what it means to be illiterate; different positions on the types of data needed to measure the extent of the problem; and the prevailing view among governments in Europe at the time that illiteracy was confined only to minority groups, thereby justifying the low priority given to it in national and regional agenda.

The same problems continue to haunt the 2005 Regional Meeting on literacy in Lyon. Illiteracy levels remain high with six percent of 15-year olds in the member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) experiencing serious difficulty in understanding the meaning of a short text. At the country level, France, which hosted the 2005 Regional Meeting in Lyon, is an eloquent illustration of the problem. In the Opening Session of the Lyon Meeting, the Director of the French Agence Nationale le Lutte Contre l'Illettrisme (ANLCI) reported twelve percent of all individuals between 18 and 65 years old living in mainland France and covered by the 2002-2003 National IVQ (Information et vie quotidienne) survey, as challenged by the written word. She further disclosed that 7 to 10 percent of those in school have difficulties with French. Considering that France is among Europe's economically advanced countries, in all probability, the figures in the less developed part of the Region are as high, if not much higher. Indeed, existing surveys substantiate this speculation although the lack of a common definition of illiteracy prevents an accurate assessment and comparison of literacy levels across countries in Europe.

While illiteracy continues to plague a significant proportion of Europe's population and cross-cultural assessments of the

problem remain problematic, the most salient improvement in the literacy situation in 2005 as compared to 1986 is the much higher level of public awareness of the problem at this time. Discourses on education—e.g. Education for All, CONFINTEA and Lifelong Learning, heightened interest in literacy as a foundational component. Even more compelling than the discursive emphasis on literacy is the dissemination of recent survey findings (e.g. International Adult Literacy Survey or IALS, Program for International Student Assessment or PISA) disclosing the existence of illiteracy among Europe's mainstream population who attended formal schools. Survey results rudely awakened governments to action, with a few creating agencies to study and monitor literacy in their respective countries, others undertaking educational reforms and some putting in place national programs to correct the situation. The only qualification to this positive development is the uneven appreciation of the serious implications of illiteracy across countries. To date, many governments in Europe have not translated their increased awareness of the problem to a higher priority for literacy programs in both their national agenda and budgets.

Pressure on European governments to raise the ante for literacy is mounting. Sharing the European Union's strategic goal of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by the second decade of the 21st century which was enunciated in the meeting of heads of states and governments in Lisbon in 2000, member states are bound to urgently turn the illiteracy problem around. For Europe to be capable of sustainable growth with better jobs and greater social cohesion, basic literacy skills and the mastery of core competencies are necessary prerequisites to guarantee conditions favorable to an individual's personal fulfillment, active citizenship, and social, cultural and professional integration. The harmonization of literacy policies and systems of assessment with the competence-based approach to education articulated in the Strategy entails the preliminary step of taking stock once

again of the issues surrounding literacy situation in the Region and collectively reviewing existing literacy practices.

Against the backdrop of the imperatives connected with the European Union (EU) Lisbon Strategy, Education for All, the Fifth International Conference of Adult Education (CONFINTEA), the Millennium Development Goals and the UN Decade for Literacy, the UNESCO Institute for Education together with the ANCLI and the French National UNESCO Commission convened the European Regional Meeting on Literacy in Lyon on 2-5 April 2005 (See Annex A for a summary of the proceedings of the Meeting). Involving 145 experts on literacy representing a wide range of institutions, from government agencies to research institutes to non-government organizations from 38 countries, the meeting aimed to

- share literacy practices while recognizing their highly contextual character;
- assess the status and literacy trends in the Region; and
- identify the challenges facing governments and the community of adult literacy practitioners.

While participants in the Lyon Meeting have cautioned against equating illiteracy with ignorance because many illiterates are intelligent and highly capable of competently negotiating the practical world of everyday life, the vulnerability of those who do not possess literacy skills to social, economic and political marginalization in European societies, where modernity has pervaded almost all areas of social life is the overriding motivation for the Meeting.

This Document presents the following key issues and advocacies identified in the 2005 Lyon Meeting:

- the concept of literacy;
- research and measurement;
- training of trainers;
- networking and partnerships; and
- institutional arrangements for eradicating illiteracy.

On the Concept of Literacy

The 2005 Lyon Meeting grappled with the concept of literacy throughout all its workshops and plenary discussions. Given the diverse concerns of organizations and individuals who shared their experiences, the Meeting understandably spanned a wide range of definitions, from literacy as the technical acquisition of basic cognitive skills, to a consideration of the skills involved to include practical skills, to the incorporation of other dimensions such as attitudes, values, emotions and motivation, to a much broader and holistic conception of literacy as the development of key or core competencies. Despite the different meanings of literacy underlying the projects and activities presented in the Meeting, however, the participants resolved to adopt an expanded notion of the concept, calling on the community of literacy experts to further clarify the meaning of literacy, refine its operationalization, and eventually arrive at a common understanding of the way it ought to be framed conceptually and methodologically.

The adoption of an expanded notion of literacy despite good practices associated with its more restricted definition merely reflects the evolution of the discourse. In 1958, UNESCO defined illiteracy in functional terms as the “inability to both read and write, with understanding, a short simple statement on one’s everyday life”. Confident then that schooling would eradicate poverty, the illiterate population was generally depicted as adults who could neither read nor write and who generally missed out on formal education. By 1978, UNESCO portrayed a functionally literate person not only as capable of reading or writing simple statements but also as one able to “engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for the effective functioning of the group or the community”. The incorporation of a citizenship dimension in the definition broadened the range of

skills required although literacy practices continued to focus on enhancing reading, writing and basic numerical skills in the absence of a consensus over what constitutes basic skills.

The OECD definition of literacy in 1995 as the “ability to understand and use written information in daily life, at home, at school and in the community to reach personal objectives and develop one’s knowledge and capacities” provided a conceptual link to an insipient notion of information society. By then, the rapid and profound changes associated with globalization and the revolution in communications technology had underscored the need for individuals to continuously unlearn old skills and learn new ones.

In the spirit of lifelong learning, it is quite possible for those who have had some formal schooling to nevertheless find difficulty in understanding new texts and managing a fast changing world. What shocked the European community in the beginning of the 21st century, however, was not the phenomenon of illiteracy in particular areas among an otherwise literate population adjusting to the complex demands of a new global order but the inability of a significant proportion of formally schooled individuals to learn basic reading, writing and quantitative skills that would allow them to understand texts connected with the relatively unchanged segments of their world and not necessarily with the new challenges of posed by globalization.

This realization has led countries like France to distinguish between two groups of people with inadequate literacy levels—those without the benefit of schooling who do not have sufficient command of the written word and those “above 16 years old who attended school but whose command ...does not allow then to meet the minimum requirements of their professional, social, cultural and personal lives”. The distinction is significant for purposes of refining the concept of illiteracy and outlining the multiple targets and strategies to address the problem.

Even as illiteracy among formally schooled individuals underscores the need to strengthen the educational system’s capacity to transmit basic literacy skills, the demands of rapid social and technological changes, economic and cultural globalization, growing diversity, competition and liberalization, social inequality of opportunities, conflicts and poverty in all its forms, and ecological sustainability require of individuals basic capabilities that go far beyond mere technical communication skills. For this reason, the EU Lisbon Strategy, which aims to make Europe the most competitive knowledge society in the world by 2015, has shifted the literacy discourse away from the acquisition of basic cognitive and practical skills towards developing competencies for assessing, managing, integrating, interacting with and evaluating knowledge. At the very least, the cognitive components of competencies include reading and writing skills, scientific literacy, mathematics and the acquisition of language.

The shift to a competency- rather than a skills-based approach has broadened the concept of literacy. As presented in the Lyon meeting, competency is defined as the ability to meet complex demands or carry out a task successfully and consists of both cognitive and non-cognitive dimensions. Combining cognitive and psychosocial elements, and requiring the development of higher levels of mental complexity, a competency-based definition necessarily incorporates an approach that is demand driven, location or context specific, action-oriented, critical, reflective and holistic (Definition and Selection of Competencies or DeSeCo, 2002). It involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills but also encompasses self-esteem and confidence building to enable people to understand and reflect critically on their life circumstances with a view to exploring new possibilities and initiating constructive change (Ireland’s National Adult Literacy Agency or NALA, 2003).

On the Concept of Literacy

The different forms of competencies that UNESCO, the EU and the OECD are currently trying to identify and map out—e.g. good command of the written word, arithmetic, competencies in information technologies, foreign languages, technological cultures, entrepreneurship and social aptitude—would fall under three broad categories, according to the DeSeCo presentation in the Lyon Meeting:

- acting autonomously (acting within a bigger picture; forming life plans; defending and asserting rights and limits);
- using tools interactively (using language, symbols and texts interactively; using knowledge and new technologies interactively); and
- interacting in socially heterogeneous groups (relating well with others; working in teams; managing and resolving conflicts).

The UNESCO Institute for Education research on the literacy trends in Europe, which was presented in the Lyon Meeting, noted that many of the country reports cited the OECD’s 1995 definition of literacy. Interestingly, though, very few reported that their respective countries have adopted an official definition. Going beyond the conceptual definition of literacy cited in the research, the Lyon Meeting resolved to adopt an expanded notion that is increasingly based on the development of competencies. The Table right shows the ideal typical depiction of the limited and expanded concepts of literacy as presented in the Lyon Meeting.

By advocating a more holistic and integrated definition of literacy that is embedded in specific socio-cultural context, the Lyon Meeting considers the discursive shift from a skills-based to competency-based definition of literacy a positive change. Nevertheless, the Meeting raised the following concerns that call for further clarification of the meaning of literacy within a competency-based discourse and its implications for the thrusts of literacy practices in the future:

Ideal typical depiction of limited and expanded concept of literacy:

Initial parameters for comparison	Limited Concept	Expanded Concept
Concept	Capacity to read, write and apply simple mathematics to everyday life	Capacity to access, integrate, manage and evaluate knowledge;
Goal	To acquire basic skills that will open windows for achieving one’s goals and participating productively in society	To understand and reflect critically on life circumstances, exploring new possibilities and participating meaningfully in society
Competencies: Cognitive dimension	Reading and writing (might include basic math and language)	Reading and writing skills, scientific literacy, math and language
Other competencies		Non-cognitive dimensions related to core competencies; critical thinking, capacity to act autonomously, use tools and interact with others (e.g. empathy, confidence-building, networking skills)
Approach	Technical (focus on dichotomies/levels) independent of contexts e.g. literate/illiterate, functional literacy levels of 1-5	Holistic, integrated, active and embedded in context

- The competency-based approach highlights, among others, the importance of adopting ICT and other newly developed technologies alongside the development of mathematical and scientific competencies beyond the basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills associated with a more limited notion of literacy. While this is a positive development, focusing on the acquisition of more complex skills might put too much emphasis (program- or resource-wise) on school-based competencies at the expense of efforts to enhance basic skills among adults who either have not gone to school or are unable to utilize the skills they learned formally.

Considering existing social inequities in Europe, this could result in widening the gaps between social groups and a greater marginalization of the poorer and minority segments of the Region’s population from the process of building the most dynamic knowledge society in the world. At the very least, both students and adults who are no longer in school ought to be targeted simultaneously.

- Targeting adults with inadequate literacy skills and children of school age entails programs throughout different life stages—e.g. family- work- and school-based programs for groups ranging from toddlers to the elderly.

On Research and Measurement

- How would programs that transmit basic skills especially among marginalized adults fit into a competency-based literacy framework? Focusing on adult literacy as traditionally conceived (i.e. the acquisition of basic skills in different life situations) within a broader and holistic paradigm would entail embedding basic skills acquisition in development or issue-oriented engagements (e.g. urban renewal, environmental sustainability) or vocational activities.
- The Lyon Meeting further suggests the need for literacy experts to identify and map the skills associated with different levels of competencies and literacy as discussed in the Meeting. At the very least, the result of this exercise ought to be a shared definition of skills at the most basic levels of communication, literacy and numeracy.
- Apart from clarifying the conceptual links between literacy and competency, it is also necessary to clarify how literacy, broadly conceived, is different but related to lifelong learning. This is important for some of the participants in the Lyon meeting because a broad notion of literacy involving core competencies for understanding and reflecting on life's circumstances' converges with the ideals and concept of lifelong learning.
- As to Europe vis-à-vis the developing world, the 2005 Lyon Meeting affirmed not only the Region's project to eradicate illiteracy but also its potential contribution to addressing literacy issues in poor and underdeveloped nations. In this regard, the challenge facing Europe is how to progress towards a knowledge society without worsening the technological and literacy gaps between the marginalized within Europe and its mainstream population, and between Europe and the industrialized world on the one hand and the poor countries on the other.

Issues of measurement have dominated the literature on literacy research over the last two decades. While the Lyon Meeting discussed various questions related to national and cross-country assessments of literacy in Europe, it nevertheless, highlighted the importance of research beyond concerns with indicators and comparative measures.

Research-based policy and program formulation to enhance literacy is a major advocacy of the Lyon Meeting. The UIE study of literacy trends noted that few countries have relied on sustained research on literacy to enlighten and sharpen their respective strategies. This is a key development after 1986 as national censuses that defined literacy rates differently were about the only major source of information about the state of literacy in a given European country at the time.

The UIE review further noted the existence of different institutional research arrangements for producing knowledge that is useful to the community of literacy practitioners. England's National Research and Development Center for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) represents a centralized arrangement while university-based literacy units depict a more decentralized arrangement. However organized, the development of research units in all countries in Europe that would closely monitor literacy and the factors associated with it is a desiderata expressed in the Meeting. Such units could undertake national surveys and generate data disaggregated by gender and other relevant considerations that would cover issues outside the scope of existing comparative surveys. They could also do follow up surveys to deepen their understanding of the nuances of literacy in different countries.

The way research is conducted in the NRDC represents good practice that the Lyon Meeting reflected upon. The Center advocates the development of a research culture that engages practitioners and scientists alike, where literacy teachers also

serve as researchers. In particular, the Center has sought to bring together researchers and practitioners in order to build reflective practice and research capacity through a system of research Fellowships that has enabled practitioners to lead group research projects and share insights from the wellspring of their experiences.

In addition to learning from good practices in literacy research, the Lyon meeting unanimously and consistently advocated the establishment of a database that would compile good practices across European countries and more importantly, provide a synthesis of lessons culled from such practices. Recommending the development of literacy or learning zones in different parts of the world, the Meeting further proposed that Europe take the initiative in organizing a regular exchange on innovative and effective literacy practices among the zones in Europe, and between European zones and those in the developing world. The outcomes of such exchanges should be incorporated into the database. Since creating and sustaining the database would entail networking with various research institutions and literacy organizations, whether based in government, academe or the private non-government and voluntary sector, the Meeting pinpointed the UNESCO Institute for Education as the institution responsible for cross-country coordination and the management of the database.

The Lyon Meeting is extremely rich in discussions of good literacy practices that ought to form the core of the database. A wide range of innovative strategies in integrating lives and spaces through family literacy practices, practices in the workplace, the use of real and imagined public spaces (e.g. museums, libraries, reading circles) for literacy as well as ICTs and distance education were discussed in the workshops as were literacy practices for specialized groups—migrants, offenders, Romas, women and youth. The Meeting also talked about model training programs that ensure

learners' participation on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the learning by trainers of the underlying philosophy/discourses and appropriate pedagogies for effective literacy work (See Annex A). Finally, issues of measurement and assessment were tackled extensively in different workshops.

Regarding measurement, the first issue concerns what is being measured? Measuring the phenomenon of literacy continues to be difficult because of the lack of a common understanding of the concept and its operationalization. For instance, existing comparative surveys measure reading and mathematical skills and the ability to use various types of written documents, narratives, charts and graphs, and quantitative texts. Although they avoid the polarization between literacy and illiteracy by locating individual performance along a scale of difficulty, the items being measured presuppose the transferability of processes reflective of location-specific practices to other contexts. Aware of the limitations associated with such unproblematic transfer, the Lyon Meeting took note of efforts by researchers with alternative methodological assumptions to develop a new kind of research based on a qualitative study of individuals in the course of everyday life—at the post office, the hospital and the pharmacy. Adopting the approach alongside measures used by existing cross-cultural surveys could reveal people's existing skills that ought to be examined and measured apart from the ones that they do not possess. The Lyon Meeting unequivocally advocates further work that would combine qualitative and quantitative measures that hew more closely to the phenomenon of literacy.

The assessment and measurement of literacy across countries in Europe is an unsettled issue in the meeting. Nevertheless, the Lyon Meeting offered the following synthesis reflecting three possible perspectives on which future meetings can build upon.

Comparative studies

The International Adult Literacy Survey or IALS conducted by OECD is the reference model of international comparative studies on literacy. IALS was followed by ALL (Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey).

Essentially, the survey asks interviewees to respond to items which are presumed to be representative of the tasks the designers of the survey wish to assess. A statistical programme transforms the collected answers into global scores which are presented as representative of individual competencies. The same process is implemented in each participant country and the average scores of the countries are compared. All the comparisons (between individuals, between items, between countries) are possible because the scores are on a common mathematically built ladder.

These surveys can provide comparative information on the development of educational systems in different countries only if national stakeholders assume that educational goals are common to all participating countries. In practice, the survey is based on a curriculum which is not self-evident. The unarticulated curriculum is masked by the enumeration of everyday tasks which, by virtue of globalization, are supposed to be similar in all the participating countries. However, the items are abstracted from their contexts.

National Studies

National studies are generally framed or drawn to assess national educational goals or to provide information about the competencies of the national population. By construction, a national study is closer to the specific context of the country, even if a national survey does not take into account regional contexts. Because of the particularities in a national survey, it would not be fair to ask interviewees from another country to answer it (even after translation). National surveys suffer from external validity; it is difficult to generalize beyond national boundaries. Nevertheless, some items in these surveys might be designed

for limited comparability with other surveys. There are many examples of bilateral surveys using half of the items proposed by one country and half of the items proposed by the other country. All items submitted by one country have to be accepted by the other. National studies provide more information on the real level of proficiency of the population than international surveys like ALL, but cannot provide useful international comparisons.

An International Framework for Assessment Surveys

In the field of literacy, especially in comparing populations with low levels of literacy, the first challenge a survey has to face is the credibility of the information that it could generate. The national reference is clearly better than the international one. But each adult training system (or educational system) has to be able to benefit from the good practices and the good organizations in other countries. One way to benefit from foreign experiences is to compare the efficiency of those experiences with their own. This comparison will be more realistic if it is based on an assessment survey. The way to combine national and international advantages should be by creating an international framework for the construction of national surveys. The recommendations have to be as precise as possible, and should allow national teams to submit items relevant to their national context. One idea is to propose items which are based on real tasks, using real national materials. The success of the task will depend not only on the level of competence of the individuals who fill the task but also on the quality of real materials they have at their disposal. International comparisons on similar tasks chosen by the participants could provide information on population's skills and the conception of written materials designed in each country.

On Training of Trainors

The importance of training literacy practitioners and professionals is among the recurring threads that connect different workshops in the Lyon Meeting. In this regard, the Meeting took note of the UIE-reported significance of NGO-based training in addition to those managed by government agencies. The Meeting further noted the findings of and the issues raised by the survey undertaken by the Uppingham Seminars in Development, UK—the Training of Literacy Educators in Developing Countries Project. Focusing on three overall trends—the institutionalization of adult literacy learning programmes; the professionalization of literacy educators; and the formalization of training programmes for adult literacy educators, the Project identified two kinds of literacy learning programmes:

- an increasing number of literacy learning programmes located inside more or less ‘formal’ adult basic education and training (ABET) or non-formal education (NFE) institutions and leading to some form of qualifications; and
- many stand-alone literacy classes tend to recruit ‘illiterates’ only and are generally short-term, with or without some other subjects such as health or income generation.

The UK-based research team also found a number of innovative programmes for special groups e.g. migrants, pastoral groups, indigenous peoples and other groups with special needs. Interestingly, a considerable number of people who have developed their own literacy skills without going to primary school or adult literacy classes were also found in the process of the study. The overall trend observed would seem to be away from a ‘developmental’ model such as ‘literacy and livelihood’ towards a ‘schooling’ model of literacy embedded in education, a curriculum-led approach rather than demand-led.

In this regard, the Lyon Meeting underscored the importance of a learner-centered approach to the training of individuals with inadequate literacy levels and the embeddedness of the methods used in their proper context. Thus, whether the training of learners or their trainors is curriculum-led in a formal schooling model or developmental in approach, the orientation towards the learner and the use of the learner’s activities or environment to enhance literacy skills in the case of learners or, in the case of literacy trainors, enhance their capacity to impart an openness to learning and particular skills, are crucial to the evaluation of the model of delivering literacy training.

The UK Project presented three categories of trainors: professional literacy educators, ‘volunteers’ who are by far the majority and other literacy workers such as supervisors, managers, material developers, trainors, etc. The Lyon Meeting is notable for its recognition of the work not only of usual literacy teachers but also of grass-roots trainors who are integrated into the community of learners. It thus advocates the development of training programs focused primarily on literacy workers, which the UIE study claims to hardly exist. It also calls for specialized training for the equivalent of the ‘maestro popular’ in Latin America—Europe’s grassroots teachers.

The main motivations for training cited in the UK survey were professionalization (and better qualifications) and improved quality of teaching, i.e., enhanced self-confidence, openness, and responsiveness etc. The need for professionalization was also often cited by respondents in the UIE Review of literacy practices. With regards to professionalization, the Lyon Meeting noted the importance of discussing the entry qualifications of literacy facilitators/trainors which the UIE study claims to differ considerably from one European country to another, as well as the type of professional training that is appropriate to different groups of literacy workers. The UK Project found two forms of training—long-term formal professional

training programmes leading to certificates and formal qualifications in an increasingly open and distance learning mode; and very short-term informal training programmes ranging from 3 days to about 3 weeks consisting mainly of technical training.

The Lyon Meeting advocates future discussion, if not a resolution of key issues connected with the findings of the UK and UIE studies that were presented in the meeting and expressed in the following questions:

- Should training be a panacea for all the ills of adult literacy learning programmes, including lack of resources?
- Is the failure of many literacy educators to carry over their training into the classroom due to approaches to teaching and learning that are alien to the cultural contexts in which the training is taking place?
- Considering the UN Literacy Decade’s efforts to intensively design innovative teaching programs adapted to local cultures and UNESCO’s observation that on the whole, uniform literacy programs have not been effective, what forms of culturally sensitive training programs have worked? Can some features be adapted to other settings?
- Is the quality of teaching and learning of literacy in any way related to the qualifications of the teacher? Put differently, is training mainly for an improved quality of teaching and learning or for the career development of the adult literacy educator?
- Do all adult literacy educators need to be professionalized or is the field best served by a relatively small core of highly trained qualified and recognized / accredited professionals supporting a much larger field of ‘volunteer’ adult educators? In this connection, should they have comparable qualifications across countries in Europe?

On Networking and Partnerships

An equally important advocacy is the call for genuine collaboration among different agencies and stakeholders in the humanist endeavor of eradicating illiteracy even as Europe envisions itself to be the world's most dynamic and competitive economy by the second decade of the 21st century.

As to networking, the Lyon Meeting highlighted the need to link various networks of literacy practitioners in Europe to each other and to other literacy communities in the world. In terms of advocacies, therefore, the Lyon Meeting certifies the following as urgent tasks:

- conceptualization and support for the establishment of a European Network of national organizations involved in adult literacy, initial discussions for which ought to be convened by UNESCO;
- considering the different types of programmes found in Europe at this time as reported by the UIE—those providing formal schooling or its equivalent; those engaged in improving and facilitating access to the labor market; those facilitating access to continued education; those dedicated to improving socio-cultural education; and those involved in socio-cultural integration, the need to link up those working in the same type of programme for purposes of exchanging good practices and strengthening their networks is paramount (In this regard, the European Basic Skills Network involving the UK, Ireland, Denmark, France, Scotland and Belgium is a good case of an existing network);
- the acquisition of information on all literacy networks and their incorporation in the databank that UIE is asked to develop starting with the networks represented by the Meeting participants.

On Institutional Arrangements

The UNESCO Institute for Education review of literacy policies reveals three types of literacy programme approaches in terms of mechanisms for delivery: provision of education within the framework of a national programme; national coverage by main providers with individual, albeit, networked programmes; and individual programme delivery. Accordingly, the first two approaches are apparent in countries that consider literacy to be a priority agenda while literacy-related programmes are delivered by individuals and organizations in countries that do not give as much importance to the problem of illiteracy.

The UIE review further notes the greater involvement of NGOs and the private sector in a wide range of literacy initiatives in the workplace, within families, communities and through distance education by these groups. This is markedly different from the situation in 1986 when most of the literacy initiatives emanated from government. While this development is encouraging, the UIE report nevertheless stressed the important role governments could and have played in effectively eradicating illiteracy.

European governments in the UIE study differed in terms of how much priority they have given to literacy in their national agenda. Some governments had explicit literacy programmes whether lodged in a single ministry, different ministries, in local government units or in a specialized body coordinating literacy efforts. The resolve of governments to fight illiteracy is exemplified in the case of France, the host country of the Lyon Meeting. It put literacy high on the country's national agenda by enshrining it in the 1998 legislation against social exclusion. Not only have the country's president and prime minister vowed to eradicate illiteracy, they have empowered a national agency—the ANLCI to effectively coordinate the main ministries involved in literacy as well public organizations, private companies and civil society engaged in

literacy work. Composed of national and regional teams, the ANLCI is research-based and is supported by the country's scientific community.

There are other models of government involvement in illiteracy and the financing of relevant programmes that are mentioned in the UIE Study which need further documentation in the context of each country's political culture and structures. The Lyon Meeting highlighted the importance of assessing these models in terms of complementation of roles among agencies and stakeholders and their effectiveness in carrying out each government's literacy-related mandate. Most important of all, however, the Meeting's primary advocacy is for governments to translate their high awareness of literacy issues in Europe into institutional and funding mechanisms to address the challenges posed by illiteracy to the evolution of the knowledge society that Europe imagines for itself in 2010.

Annex A

Literacy and the Promotion of Citizenship: The Challenge of Learning Summary of Proceedings

3 April 2005

Opening Programme

The question ‘How can citizens assume civic responsibilities without the mastery of reading and writing?’ set the tone of the Meeting along its theme. The opening session situated the Meeting in the triple context of the UN Literacy Decade, Education for All and the EU’s Lisbon strategy. Accordingly, its timing is auspicious, coming as it did at a point when the European community had raised the ante for efforts to eradicate the problem of illiteracy. The ANLCI Director’s disclosure of the illiteracy figures in France served as a stark reminder of the rationale for the Meeting. Anticipating the outcome of the Conference, the opening session stressed the need for innovative, creative and participatory action plans that would provide politicians and other stakeholders, viable options to address illiteracy.

Simultaneous Workshops on Literacy in Different Spaces

A. Family Literacy

The Workshop on Family Literacy affirmed the effectiveness of an inter-generational approach that emphasizes the role of the family and the community in the improvement of the literacy skills of children and parents. Literacy projects involving parents are known in industrialized as well as developing countries. However, the specific educational policy incorporating activities with parents, activities with children and joint activities, is more widespread in the Anglo-American countries. Within Europe, some countries (e.g. the United Kingdom and more recently, Malta) are advanced in the practice of family literacy while the majority of European countries have little experience in it.

Taking a broad view of the concepts of family and literacy, workshop participants reported positive assessments of the programme. Its results include boosting parents’ and children’s literacy; enhancing parents’ ability to help their children; motivating parents to study further or, for those who have given up on employment, to seek jobs; developing parents’ self-confidence and communication skills; and empowering them as learners, partners, co-educators and citizens.

The workshop further noted that successful family literacy programmes are able to link pre-school and primary school education and teacher training. Moreover, they are ‘tailor-made’ to suit the cultural and local contexts of the learners. Some programmes are adapted to monolingual situations; others to multilingual contexts. In addition, the successful programmes cited the fun experience of participants as an important motivation for learners to stay on in family literacy programmes.

There are variations in the programmes found in the countries represented by workshop participants. Most of them involve preschoolers although some programmes deal with school-age children. The balance of attention between parents’ and children’s needs also differs, with some programmes using children to draw parents and address their needs while others focus on balancing the literacy requirements of both generations. Regarding the people who take care of the day-to-day level literacy activities, some programmes rely on the staff of ‘early year’ programmes to deliver both early year and adult teaching, while others employ a separate staff.

Countries also differ in the level of participation of eligible families in the areas served by the programme. Moreover, they vary in the mainstreaming of family literacy – i.e., whether governments provide special funding or leave the voluntary sector (‘civic society’) to support programme activities. In cases where governments provide funds, some of them merely ‘pump-prime’ a programme by giving seed money, leaving

the more substantial task of resource generation to local education authorities (school boards). Apart from differences in government funding support, there are also significant differences in how the programme is delivered, that is, whether they are delivered in homes or in community venues.

Addressing the Conference theme, the workshop underscored the contribution of family literacy programmes, albeit indirect, to the promotion of citizenship. Like other programmes, they help reduce literacy inequalities; increase the repertoire of literacy skills; empower communities through literacy practices; and raise the overall awareness of literacy in society.

While the workshop evaluated family literacy programmes in a very positive light, it also discussed issues that need to be addressed:

- Programme reach: how to reach “invisible” families or conversely, how to make the programmes accessible to them;
- Over reliance on mothers, with very few special programmes involving fathers;
- Untapped role of grandparents in the education of children;
- Diversity among programmes in terms both of provision and research; and
- Teacher/tutor training that needs revitalization.

Finally, in its discussion of the applicability of family literacy to developing countries, the workshop recognized profound differences in family life that require attention.

Simultaneous Workshops on Literacy in Different Spaces

B. Literacy in the Workplace

The workshop looked at the experiences in promoting literacy in the workplace in Ireland, the Netherlands, and England. In Ireland, workers and corporations prepared the strategy that the government adopted and provided dedicated funding for. The Irish experience highlights the importance of raising the awareness of employees and employers. More importantly, it underscores the need to adopt strategies that are unique to particular conditions in specific fields and workplaces, a point that resonated with the presentation on the National Health Service Programme in England. The presentation of the Dutch experience, on the other hand, zeroed in on the efforts of the Reading and Writing Foundation to document good practices among companies, develop appropriate materials based on them, and encourage employees to render literacy-related volunteer work in communities.

The workshop presentation and discussion raised the following concerns:

- the employers' low level of awareness of literacy and related issues and the need to make them understand the issues;
- the need to handle literacy issues sensitively because employees might be reluctant to admit their literacy needs for fear of losing their jobs;
- the importance of learners identifying their own weaknesses;
- the effectiveness of a curriculum based on adult learning needs;
- the value of assuring employers of the benefit of improved literacy to project the good training of the staff associated with the business;
- the role of unions in fostering a view among employees that literacy practices and other available educational programmes would redound to their personal development; and
- the lack of appreciation among employers and employees of the added benefits of participation in literacy programmes such as enhancing the self-confidence of learners and improving communication.

C. Literacy in Public Spaces and Communities

The workshop shared experiences on how learning in public and community venues attracts a varied group of learners. The presenters documented innovative ways of using public spaces such as civic centers, small town cultural centers, cafes, health centers and libraries for purposes of literacy acquisition. The assumption that the use of these facilities would make adult education more accessible to communities of learners is corroborated by the presentations. Moreover, efforts to institutionalize these innovations were mentioned in the workshop. In particular, the Dutch Platform Non-formal Education and Foundation for Folk High School uses innovative methods to motivate local providers of adult education and other stakeholders to work together, form local networks, and develop local education plans in order to realize effective and exciting local learning environments for all adults in general and specific disadvantaged groups in particular.

The Lelystad experience in Netherlands is a case in point. Education providers in this Dutch locality started a structured process of transmitting to the managers of public spaces an 'ideal picture' of adult education through drawings. The managers' trainor begins the process by drawing a river landscape with different boats sailing on it and several passengers out on shore watching. The story proceeds to show boat captains talking among themselves while going slowly through a dock. Among other concerns, they wonder why the people on shore are not joining them. At some point, they leave their boats to talk to the people and are surprised to know that their potential passengers could clearly explain what they want, how to reach their destination, and which kind of support they will need during their journey. Thereafter, the boat managers in the dock clash and negotiate until they decide to form a common fleet. Knowing what the people on shore want, they are able to take in more riders and move in the same direction.

Among the conclusions of the Grundtvig Project (GLOP) presented in the workshop are the following:

- municipalities are crucial for developing adequate learning programmes;
- multifunctional civic centers provide the best material and people for learning programmes;
- lifelong learning for the inhabitants of small municipalities entails the use of technology, education and a training center to open windows to new realities;
- adult education ought to be associated with various forms of education and not only formal education;
- venues like public libraries and museums should encourage citizens to seek informal education within their confines;
- the establishment of a chain of facilities and measures for adult learning would serve as an instrument of social cohesion;
- the chain of cooperation among adult education centers and schools, museums, libraries and social services is possible with the full support of local authorities;

The workshop proposed the following recommendations:

- UNESCO should be asked to collect good practices in the use of public spaces;
- The sustainability of projects through continuous funding of literacy and education programmes in public spaces must be encouraged;
- Platforms involving adult education stakeholders in local communities that cut across groups and sectors must be encouraged to coordinate efforts; and
- Learning ambassadors must be developed to facilitate dialogue towards adult education.

Simultaneous Workshops on Literacy for Excluded Groups

D. Distance Education and ICTs

The Workshop showcased two different experiences on literacy, covering distance education and literacy through ICT— Ireland's NALA Distance Education Literacy Programme and Germany's Alpha Portal Literacy Learning project or APOLL. Started in 2000, the former programme has a holistic definition of literacy that goes beyond technical skills (reading, writing, numeracy). It includes building self-esteem and confidence. The programme is driven by the need to know how adults can be mobilized to take part in learning opportunities through distance learning (via television, radio or the web) with feedback from a real tutor.

Consisting of a TV series, a learner pack, a free telephone support line, and a website, the programme includes four key elements: variety; its catering to different age levels; relevance to the learner; and enjoyment. It also uses everyday topics, using learners to relay their experiences.

The Alpha Portal Literacy Learning project (APOLL) developed by the German Adult Education Association, on the other hand, emerged in a context where it had no stable financial support from the government in a country without any national literacy agency/department. It represents the cooperation between the German Adult Education Association and the Federal Literacy Association, supported by the Ministry for Education and Research (€ 1.5 million for the development of the portal). The programme is premised on the need to upgrade skills for the labor market, to contribute to participation and citizenship, and to enhance people's capacity for self-determination. Using news, events, data banks and an exchange portal, APOLL supports the work of tutors, enhances the media skills of functional illiterates, and raises overall public awareness on illiteracy. It produces a weekly magazine with easy-to-read texts addressed to people with low literacy skills and has set up an online literacy learning tool.

The workshop concluded that ICTs cannot be the only literacy tool. Rather they are meant to complement a range of other tools and learning activities (in particular personal contact with and feedback from a tutor). The workshop's recommendations include lobbying with national governments and the European Commission to support networks of educators across countries (in the area of adult literacy); the creation of an informal network of workshop participants through e-mail; and the sharing of good practices.

Simultaneous Workshops on Literacy for Excluded Groups

A. Migrant Literacy

The workshop shared practices and research on migrant literacy. These practices assume that migration to another country could reduce otherwise competent people to levels of incompetence. Migrants accordingly face the challenges of a new language and the need to acquire proficiency in it.

Against this backdrop, Sweden has developed a national curriculum for teaching Swedish to migrants above 16 years of age. It consists of four levels in the areas of literacy, numeracy and social studies. Learners are free to stop after each level. Regarding the methodology of migrant literacy courses, visual materials are used as starting points for oral and written practice.

The workshop raised several factors that could spell success in ensuring that European migrants develop literacy skills to cope with the demands of living in their host communities. These include the following:

- Being sensitive to the culture of the migrant learner;
- adopting an approach that takes the perspective of the learner;
- developing curricula attuned to the learner's cultural context;
- using a migrant's mother tongue on condition that teachers are properly trained; and

- exchanging information and experience with other programmes to refine the approach.

The workshop stressed the need for a broad definition of literacy beyond its technical focus to one that views literacy as a socio-cultural practice.

B. Literacy in Prisons

Education in prison takes place in a very particular context: the learners are not happy in their environment and the challenge to create a learning environment is daunting. On the surface, education would not seem to make sense to prisoners. The practices presented in the workshop, however, assume the following:

- a humanistic approach that sees prisoners as subjects capable of expressing their demand for education rather than objects;
- the need, in line with a humanist approach, to 1) change the relation between the trainer and the inmate; 2) help the detainees develop self esteem, skills and the capacity to reflect on their lives; 3) revise public perception of non-formal education for prisoners; 4) inform the prison staff that non-formal education are learning activities; and 5) make them more sensitive to the preferences of inmates;
- education is the right of every human being, prisoners included;
- the inadequacy of vocational training for prisoners. Since prisons kill initiatives (i.e., a good inmate is perceived by those controlling total institutions to be someone laid back), social skills must be developed alongside basic skills; and
- lack of recognition of education as possible basis for the reduction of years of imprisonment similar to the "days of work in exchange for less time in prison scheme"

Simultaneous Workshops on Literacy for Excluded Groups

By way of recommendations, the workshop proposed the reinforcement of linkages between formal education and non-formal education, using the vocational training of prisoners as a preliminary step towards their formal education. Considering public perception of prisoners, the prisoner's right to education is a citizenship issue. In this regard, UNESCO ought to support all initiatives that demonstrate the efficiency and utility of non-formal education for prisoners.

C. Literacy among the ROMAS

The workshop commenced with an overview of the situation of the Roma people in Europe and their literacy needs. They constitute about 12 million people dispersed across the world, who suffer from the stigma of the label "gypsies". In recent years, the Roma people have increasingly been taking a stand and stressing their right to be different but equal at the same time. In the spirit of building multicultural societies, their full participation in society, including their integration into the education system must be ensured. In this connection, literacy is seen as a key to their freedom.

In Romania, the Cultural Center of Babadag, a poor town in the South-East of Bulgaria where 30 percent of the population is Turkish Roma are found, provide a basic skills programme to 50 learners in collaboration with the country's IIZ/DVV (International Office of the German Adult Education Association) project and with the help of the local Muslim leader (Iman). Riding on the desire of learners to be literate as a prerequisite to obtaining a driver's license, the programme is quite successful. Despite its low graduation rate (35.7%), the provision of certificates which are the equivalent of four years of basic education has opened up opportunities for employment to the marginalized Turkish Roma. In the process the programme has projected good models of self-empowerment and active citizenship, mutual trust and respect to the community. Unfortunately, some of the gains in this regard were eroded and other potential learners in the target group were discouraged

from participating because of the lack of partnership between the Ministry of Education and the Project.

A recent survey in Bulgaria shows that about 12.7 percent of Bulgarians are illiterate. However, among the country's Roma population, 25 percent of the young people are illiterate and 35 percent have reading difficulties. Furthermore, 55 percent of the Roma youth are unemployed. Adapting the best practices in other countries to Bulgaria, the country's Ethno-cultural Dialogue Foundation asserts the need for vocational training and professional qualification. This requires agreements with employers so that they will allow their Roma employees to participate in the courses.

In Catalonia, the Romani Women's Association Drom Kotar Mestipen, which advocates official recognition of the Roma people by government authorities, documented good practices that include the collective discussion of women's problems for purposes of gaining access to education. The transformation of formal schools into learning communities represents a democratic model of adult education, which builds on affirmative action within the education system, and which has been successful because of its responsiveness to real needs and strong connection to Roma organizations.

With the launching by the Prime Ministers of 8 European countries of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), the workshop noted the importance of a European model of solving the "Roma problem". It also stressed, among many other points, the importance of challenging the patriarchal traditions among the Roma people in Bulgaria and Romania following the lead of the Roma women in Catalonia. Another experience presented showed how effectively the Roma learn in their own language.

The workshop concluded with the following assertions:

- Education is key to achieving any progress in the inclusion of the Roma people in mainstream society and for improving the quality of Romani life;
- Basic education for the Roma people ought to be officially recognized and must be of good quality.
- The educational experience is not only enriching students but also teachers who work with Roma.
- Roma organizations are important for advocating quality education, and for participating in and having an influence on political action.
- Community participation is mandatory for the transformation of schools and the educational success of all.
- Romani women play a crucial role in advancing the development of the Roma people.
- The advancement of education should be prioritized to help the Roma people overcome the discrimination that they currently experience in society.

D. Addressing Gender Issues among Young Adults and Adults

Do women still face exclusion in Europe? How is gender seen in the recent global movements such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) or Education for All (EFA)? These were the prominent questions addressed in the workshop which concentrated on gender perspectives on literacy.

In response to these questions, the workshop presentation noted that there are positive developments in the role of women in European society. Some women, for instance, were able to break the glass ceiling, reaching positions traditionally reserved for men. The discussion of literacy as a tool for personal empowerment has encouraged more discussion on active citizenship among women, suggesting further that literacy has not only benefited families but the women themselves.

The situation, however, is more complex than the observed improvements in the women's status. Recent trends seem to point to some setbacks. The MDG and EFA measure literacy as an instrumental and technical skill. By simplifying a nuanced concept, one of the workshop's paper presentors noted that Europe is back to the situation where policymakers viewed women as needing literacy skills to be effective mothers rather than for their personal empowerment. Accordingly, it is also disturbing that the literacy discourse is mainly concentrated in the developing world when there are still about 30 percent of the European population, according to IALS, who have problems with literacy. Regarding literacy among women in Europe, the presenter bemoaned the lack of gender disaggregated data in IALS, making it difficult to analyze literacy from a gender perspective.

Another paper presented concrete efforts to address the literacy needs of women in Spain through the popular university movement. The focus and approach of popular universities, however, are not confined to goals that are associated with the technical notion of literacy. Rather, they aim to provide personal and social transformation in a holistic way. The popular universities address issues such as active citizenship, basic capacities, social integration, employment, lifelong learning and intercultural learning in a rapidly changing world for women who are burdened by multiple demands in the private and public spheres of their lives.

As to young adults, the current trend in England according to a third paper shows a marked increase in achievers but at the same time a rise in the number of non-achievers. The gap between the ones doing well in school and the ones who are not is widening. Incorporating gender, there are as many girls as boys among the 16-18 year olds who are not in employment, education or training.

The following were among other observations raised in the workshop:

- At the European level, girls are achieving better in school in the areas of reading and writing, an observation corroborated by different tests (PISA etc.). However, boys are doing better in mathematic and technical skills which are increasingly needed in the current employment market. Girls and women are still excluded from jobs requiring such special skills.
- The discussion revolved around the issue of what is really meant by literacy from a gender perspective. Different notions of literacy, ranging from a limited or technical understanding in favor of measurement and comparison, to a holistic view that sees literacy as a human right for empowering people and turning them into active citizens, were presented.
- There is agreement in the Workshop, however, that the statistics are never gender free and that there should be more work on the development of gender sensitive indicators.
- The need for a broad literacy program that would reach young adults was raised. Participants working with young people argued that excluded groups very often have negative attitudes towards schooling and would not attend literacy classes that remind them of formal schools. A more holistic programme with innovative pedagogical methods, on the other hand, might attract them to participate in activities to improve their literacy skills.

The panelists shared insights and literacy-related experiences from Africa, Asia and Latin America. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the highest illiteracy rate and where oral tradition predominates, the formal schooling system is not well adapted to the indigenous system. As a consequence, children educated in such schools become literate in a culture that is alien to their environment. Under the circumstances, literacy practices have failed to bring the light that would replace illiteracy, a state of being Africans depict as 'blacker than the darkest night'. The challenge facing literacy advocates and education workers in Africa, therefore, is how to promote true citizenship through literacy in a way that is coherent with the way of life in the region.

Ironically, the alienation of the school system from day-to-day conditions in Africa provides an opportunity for family literacy programmes not just to improve literacy skills but more importantly to enable parents who are embedded in indigenous knowledge systems to exchange information with their children who, through their schooling, are becoming increasingly part of the modern culture influenced by the North. The two-way flow promises to contribute to the dynamics and closeness of the family.

Literacy programmes in the workplace are also found in Africa, e.g. in some textile and transportation companies. There are also emerging schools for adult literacy that highlight dialogue on major issues of society. Regarding community and public literacy, Africa has many experiences of literacy initiatives that have led to collective empowerment.

Plenary Session on Literacy Practices in Other Regions

The African presentation noted that the concept of literacy as used in Africa is still confined to reading, writing and arithmetic. Depending on the groups concerned, i.e. farmers' associations, the concept should accordingly expand to include skills to manage the learner's environment. Moreover, literacy programmes ought to develop innovative strategies to empower women in light of the patriarchal structure of gender relations in the region.

The Asian presentation began by noting that the initiatives to enhance a broadly-conceived notion of literacy in nucleated families, at the workplace, and in the relatively homogenous middle class communities in Europe find their counterparts in Asian societies within enclaves of modernity in the region. There are for instances, computer literacy programmes and other vocational courses for the elderly and the clerical staff. Museums and some libraries offer personal advancement programmes, all of them advertised in the language of a lifelong learning discourse. However, except for a few countries like Singapore, the enclaves are small in most countries in Asia. The region after all is constituted by societies that are characterized by uneven development and a significant number of marginal communities ranging from traditional/indigenous to transitional rural communities to big pockets of poor multi-ethnic communities in urban areas.

Against this backdrop, the Asian presentation resonated with the view from Africa. For instance, literacy and education efforts have not necessarily led to development because they are unconnected to the everyday life and concerns of marginal communities. The reading and writing skills learned in formal school are not integrated into livelihood and development projects.

Under these conditions, the most successful literacy programmes are those that integrate traditional and modern knowledge systems as well as apply literacy skills and practices to daily community activities.

The effectiveness of literacy efforts that are embedded in community contexts was a major argument in the Asian presentation. Studies show that literacy does not have a direct effect on thought processes; its effects are said to be mediated by the learner's immersion in community life, particularly in areas characterized by intense development activity and high levels of popular participation.

In light of studies on the determinants of successful literacy practice, the Asian presentation underscores the importance of community-based strategies in literacy enhancement and the coordinated efforts of multiple stakeholders; the potential role of the development community including donors in campaigning for the integration of literacy and education into various components of development projects; and the expansion of the concept of public spaces beyond institutions that can be delineated physically such as museums and cultural centers to more transient imagined communities like the reading circles in Bangladesh.

The Latin American presentation shared insights gained from the presenter's work in Nicaragua and Chile. Recruiting learners and keeping them is a major challenge not just for Europe but for Latin America as well. In this region, literacy practitioners have relied on popular or grassroots teachers (maestros popular); used life stories and biographies; and approach literacy in a holistic way.

The experience in Latin America shows that popular teachers who do not originate from the same target group and have not benefited from any professional training but are nevertheless deeply entrenched in the

same culture and conditions as the learners have proven to be very effective. As their peers, learners find it easier to relate to grassroots teachers. Conversely, the teaching efforts of popular maestros are affirmed by the ease with which they are able to draw from the shared experiences of everyday life in their pedagogy. In the course of helping enhance literacy, it is remarkable that these teachers have been able to hone their skills through informal on-the-job training.

To a certain extent, popular maestros are like literacy ambassadors, exuding goodwill among potential learners. In this regard, it might be fruitful according to the panel to link literacy programmes to the idea behind the Ambassador Project in Nicaragua. Ambassadors for literacy can be appointed to attract learners to literacy programmes projected in media and public spaces.

Like the African presentation, the Latin American discussion underscored the importance of a holistic approach to literacy. Accordingly, literacy in Nicaragua and Chile had always meant more than teaching techniques. It was always linked to issues of common interest—health care, agrarian issues, and the education of the next generation. The challenge lies in how issue-linked efforts towards the improvement of literacy skills can be coordinated.

4 April 2005

Plenary Session: Ensuring Quality in Literacy

The plenary session began with a synthesis of the discussion of the previous day. Beyond summarizing the key points raised in each workshop, the synthesis identified recurring themes that ran through various workshops and plenary sessions. These include

- the need for a more holistic approach to literacy that is embedded in the context of various communities and development concerns;
- the need to further explore and refine the concept of literacy;
- sensitivity to and consultation with potential and actual participants in literacy programmes, preferably with an understanding of their situations and cultures;
- the critical role of teachers and facilitators as culturally creative and psychologically-sensitive trainers, whether they be formal or popular grassroots teachers;
- the need to highlight successful cases to motivate participants; the strategies for doing this might include something similar to the Ambassador of Literacy project;
- the importance of compiling good practices, with UNESCO cited as the lead institution for this endeavor;
- the importance of cooperation among different government agencies and the need to ensure the sustainability of such coordination; and
- the need to establish or strengthen networks for exchange and coordination among literacy practitioners as well as build a critical mass of advocates who will not only sustain the network but support each other's work.

The presentations in the plenary session argued for a reconceptualization of literacy beyond the acquisition of the technical skills of reading and writing. The

presentation of OECD findings defined literacy as the capacity to access, integrate, evaluate and manage information and knowledge. It provides learners a window to the world and the linguistic, textual and symbolic tools to engage with the world as acting and autonomous individuals interacting with various groups.

Recast in this manner, literacy would have three components: reading and writing; scientific literacy, and mathematical knowledge. With regards to the last component, literacy is connecting abstract mathematics to the real world. The extent to which the acquisition of literacy skills is a function of aggregate contextual data on socio-economic background or the distribution of opportunities was also discussed

Among other findings, the OECD presentation noted that countries with high levels of academic achievement had students with more than 250 books in their homes compared to the less diverse and lower number of books among low performers. The presentation also underscored the role of schools in bringing students into the virtuous cycle of increased reading interest and student performance. Since the study found students from disadvantaged households who had more books and performed well, it concludes that engagement in reading may be an effective policy lever to mediate the effects of social background on school performance.

The presentation of the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy raised several quality issues: equality; motivation and persistence; effective teaching and assessment; pedagogy for subjects; teacher education, professional development and reflective practice; and research-based practice and policy. It highlighted the importance of a learner-centered pedagogy, the value of research, and the effectiveness of embedding literacy programmes in vocational or recreational programmes that

require the capacity of vocational and literacy teachers to work as a team and the time for them to plan together.

The presentations reminded the participants that the shifting conception of literacy is framed by the Europe's Lisbon goal of becoming the most dynamic, competent and knowledge-based economy in 2015. The goal is centered on Europe and emphasizes the competitiveness of the EU's economy. In connection with the Lisbon strategy, one of the plenary papers stressed the need to go beyond the framework of competition, highlighting as well the importance of cooperation. In the realm of literacy work, cooperation could take the form of joint research and literacy assessment efforts.

The following summarizes some other key points raised by the papers:

- Learning centers at the moment are supply- rather than demand-driven.
- There is very little pedagogy developed to use appropriate teaching strategies.
- ICT is being used in literacy work but as a boat-on approach. In other words, it is not well integrated. Nor has the current thinking shifted to take into account changing genres in which people read and write.
- Measurement skills and learning needs are changing increasingly, with math becoming more visible as a necessary skill.
- Full understanding of literacy learning must take into account political, institutional and cultural learning contexts.
- There is inadequate emphasis on subject-specific pedagogy.

Simultaneous Workshops on Ensuring Quality

A. Ensuring Learner's Participation

Finding learners and keeping them in literacy courses is a common problem among the workshop participants. In response, two examples of how to engage learners were presented. The Skills for Life Strategy in England represents a government approach that targets millions of people. The Frontier College in Canada, on the other hand, is a grassroots organization with about 3000 adult learners per year.

Launched in 2001, the Skills for Life Strategy is a holistic approach to education that is of high quality, integrative, comprehensive, engaging and motivating. Its priorities are to boost the demand for learning; increase capacity; improve quality; and increase the learners' achievement. It aims to reach all institutions, workplaces and advocates a whole organizational approach to literacy.

The Get-on marketing campaign of the Skills for Life Strategy uses a Gremlin figure representing an inner voice telling people that they can achieve something. This campaign is well-known in England and has created an atmosphere in which potential learners find it easier to admit that they lack some basic skills such as reading and writing. Another successful strategy consists of workplace courses where employers are paid for substitute workers while the regular employee is attending a literacy course.

The Frontier College Programme, on the other hand, targets populations that are geographically or socially isolated. The learners consist of marginalized groups such as homeless people, migrant workers and disadvantaged urban-based children. Believing that every place is a learning site and each person a learner, the programme engages more learners in literacy courses that are referred to as 'embedded learning'.

The Frontier College trains volunteers who subsequently facilitate courses in different places such as homeless centers, urban community centers and workplaces. The idea is for volunteers to go where the people are rather than to wait for learners to go to the location of the school.

Reminiscent of the concept of 'maestro popular' discussed in the previous day's plenary session, volunteer teachers in the programme are initially part of the group that they are teaching. This means that during the day the teacher would work side by side in the field with migrant workers, and in the evenings he/she would facilitate literacy classes for them. The learners are said to feel more comfortable with a person who shares their lives and work.

Beyond the presentations, the workshop participants noted several points:

- the usefulness of standard tests even if they have been criticized; the results of the IALS, for instance, have helped the literacy movement in the United Kingdom keep the issue high in the country's political agenda;
- the need to market literacy to different people, and to train those who will be involved accordingly; in this regard, marketing strategies for companies would differ from those used for other institutions;
- the need for internal marketing among practitioners—e.g., teachers, facilitators, adult educators to make them more involved in policy and strategy development and in formulating new initiatives; and
- the need to overcome the separation between formal and informal learning environments.

B. Literacy for Active Citizenship

The workshop focused on clarifying the concept of literacy and how literacy links up with citizenship. The participants advanced the following points:

- Literacy is not a set of cognitive skills, it is a social practice. This concept leads to a coherent approach to pedagogy.
- Literacy is not a necessary condition for citizenship but it promotes critical participation or more meaningful citizenship.
- The context (the person, the institution, the country, the setting) determines the content of literacy and citizenship. Learning is always situated (e.g. the younger learner usually has more qualification than the older in the use computers).

As to the links between literacy and citizenship, the workshop discussed the following ways by which they may be connected:

- transforming citizenship into a teaching subject by providing access to authentic texts (and not texts and comments about texts); in this regard, the use of materials available in the environment of the learner, could be incorporated into literacy practice;
- by stressing the importance of everyday public services, the citizens are not merely seen as customers but are trained to understand, negotiate, and if need be, protest; literacy is seen as the natural consequence of the process of learning how to understand, negotiate and protest;
- by using literacy pedagogy that will make knowledge, skills, attitudes and linguistic tools that promote social competencies (i.e. initiatives, cooperation) explicit.

The workshop advocates a new approach to citizenship, from "the citizen" with his or her rights and entitlements, to citizenship as public participation.

Simultaneous Workshops on Ensuring Quality

C. Quality through Professional Development

The workshop focused on the training and professional development opportunities of adult literacy teaching and support staff. It aimed to review existing provisions and try to cull some lessons from it.

The workshop presented cases of professional development training in Austria, Portugal and Belgium, respectively. The professional development of the training staff in Austria is a new programme that started in 2003 within an inter-institutional network of different organizations engaged in literacy training. The philosophy behind its teacher training course is one of co-operative learning that builds upon the experience of the trainees, provides an opportunity to deepen knowledge on issues of interest, is developed through evaluation, and supported by international experts .

The Proformar project in Almada, Portugal, on the other hand, targets 12-18 year old students with migrant backgrounds (Brazil, Africa). It is composed of three subprojects: the Teacher Training Centre for continuous training of trainers; the ICT Competence Centre (since 1997) to develop both the ICT skills of teachers, and a virtual learning environment which supports web-base courses; and the Centre for Recognizing, Validating and Certifying Competencies (since 2002) which is open to all Portuguese citizens.

The Belgian programme Lire et Ecrire focuses mainly on immigrants. Enlightened by Paulo Freire's Reflection-Action Aid approach, which was adapted to the Belgian context, interactions between trainers and trainees

take place in workshops where they use physical representations to visualize relevant issues in the closer and wider environment.

The following are some of the conclusions of the workshop:

- The training educator is not the only factor for achieving quality but it is an important factor.
- There are gaps in the expectations between literacy learners and literacy educators/tutors, and literacy educators/tutors and their trainers.
- This gap can also be an opportunity to come up with new training models which are tailor-made to the specific needs and interests of the learners.
- How to overcome these gaps is a challenge. Their existence often means that the training is not carried over to classroom practice. (Training is not equal to quality, and quality is not equal to performance, but training should be equal to performance.)
- There is tension between training and professional development for professional status, and training for enhanced effective teaching and learning.

D. Assessment, measurement and accreditation

To build and implement a public policy, elements for diagnosis and evaluation of the literacy levels of the population must be available. Major international organizations (OECD, UNESCO, etc.) have carried out literacy surveys showing differences in literacy levels and concerns across countries in Europe and the world. Given the multifaceted feature and complexity of the concept of literacy and the variation from one country to another, the question of whether standard assessments used in international studies would correspond to real literacy abilities were raised in the workshop.

The papers presented reflect differences in underlying philosophies of science with one paper highly critical of the epistemology of surveys. This paper proposed instead the use of qualitative methods such as observation of real life situations and knowledge of common culture that are not in the texts used in daily life. The other papers accept the methodological premises of quantitative measures but recognize on the one hand, the value of qualitative methods, and on the other hand, the need to develop more innovative indicators to measure literacy levels that would motivate respondents to move to modules that test higher literacy levels.

In addition to the question of how qualitative and quantitative measures can be combined which was not fully tackled, the workshop discussed the value of comparative analysis. Two positions emerged—one is the desirability of universal measures to compare literacy levels across the countries in Europe while recognizing the weaknesses of current indicators. A second position is one which sees the value of comparative analysis but reduces its scope to a few items while focusing on the nuances of measuring literacy levels on a national scale.

Plenary Session: Status of Literacy in Europe

The last plenary session on the second day of the Meeting gave an overview of the findings of UIE research involving 23 countries (Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Canada/ Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom). Compared to the findings and recommendations of the UNESCO meeting in 1986, the conclusion of the study is that with regards to literacy-related issues, (e.g. definition, measurement, role of government and civil society and who the excluded groups are) many things have remained the same twenty years later. The study noted variations in the definition of literacy across Europe, in the priority given to literacy in national agenda; and the responsibility of government for improving its citizens' skills.

Countries also vary in terms of whether their governments have explicit literacy programmes or not, and whether the programmes are lodged in a single ministry, different ministries, in local government units or in a specialized body coordinating literacy efforts. Countries also differ in programme delivery—from providing formal schooling or its equivalent to improving and facilitating access to the labour market, to improving socio-cultural education and integration.

Among the other issues identified in the study that need further elaboration are the role of a wide range of non-government organizations and private initiatives; ICTs and the professionalization and certification of literacy teachers and facilitators. Finally,

the study summarized ongoing trends that are likely to continue into the future—the shift in the language of literacy discourses in line with the EU Lisbon Strategy; the consequent conceptual shift in notion of literacy, from the acquisition of skills (at different levels) to competencies; profound changes in jobs, social relations, identities and communities; a call for greater coherence in policies and strategies across countries in the European Union; and greater networking and partnerships.

The plenary session further discussed the broadening of the concept of literacy and its focus on both cognitive and non-cognitive forms of competencies. Complementing the OECD presentation in an earlier plenary session, both the DeSeCo and NALA presentations argued for competence as a more dynamic and holistic concept that integrates knowledge, cognitive and practical skills, attitudes, emotions, motivation, values and ethics with: interacting in socially heterogeneous groups; acting autonomously; and using tools interactively.

Simultaneous Workshops: Challenges for Literacy in Europe

The five workshop groups identified the following concerns and recommendations:

- Clarify the definition of literacy and lobby for its integration and priority in the EU's agenda for lifelong learning;
- Reflect on each country's position on the Lisbon Agenda;
- Move away from associating adult literacy only with disadvantaged groups
- Establish and link various literacy networks;
- Develop learning/literacy zones beyond Europe for purposes of sharing experiences across the globe; while the Meeting resolved to make Europe take the lead in literacy matters, the participants also recognize innovations in literacy practices that are found in other parts of the world;
- Foster exchange among literacy practitioners within Europe and beyond Europe;
- Centralize information on all networks;
- Support the establishment of a European Network of national organizations involved in adult literacy;
- Compile cases of good practices within and outside Europe and disseminate them to all possible networks;
- Convene/train key people in an intensive sharing of best practices;
- Pinpoint the responsibility for cross-country coordination, the establishment of databases and network of networks to UNESCO/UIE.
- Link the key actors in the literacy community who participated in the Lyon meeting to each other.

5 April 2005

Synthesis of the Challenges and Recommendations for Future Action

The Meeting concluded with the presentation of the following challenges and Recommendations:

A. On Operationalizing an Expanded Concept of Literacy

- Translating the paradigm shift from a limited to an expanded concept of literacy into concrete approaches, programmes, and strategies consistent with the philosophy and spirit of a broader and more holistic view;
- Systematically relating the expanded notion of literacy to democratic governance and citizenship;
- Integrating/imbedding literacy practices into/in development or issue-oriented engagements (e.g. in the area of environmental sustainability, urban renewal, cultural heritage);
- Operationalizing a nuanced concept of literacy in particular contexts for purposes of monitoring and comparison;

B. On Measuring Literacy Tasks Towards Developing Measures for Monitoring Literacy

- Dialogue among researchers engaged in the development of quantitative measures such as the IALS and ALL to further refine comparative measures for monitoring changes in literacy; developing measures alongside comparative indicators that are embedded in national, social, political, economic and cultural contexts and that incorporate other quantifiable variables identified through qualitative research;
- Development of innovative indicators for national assessments (and if possible, international comparisons) that are enlightened by qualitative research and nonpositivistic methodological frames.

C. On Prioritizing Literacy In The Region During United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD)

- Ensuring the prioritization of literacy in the agenda of European governments particularly during the UN Literacy Decade;
- Substantiating government prioritization by mandating particular agencies to initiate/pursue literacy goals and ensuring the effective coordination of such agencies (e.g. ANLCI)
- Reviewing and articulating the European Union's vision, role and contribution to UNLD and its programmes;
- Relating to the European Commission Working Group on Basic Skills to ensure that literacy as a basic skill remains high in the policy agenda;
- Exerting concerted multisectoral efforts to promote literacy and citizenship and ensuring the sustainability and institutionalization of such efforts;

Tasks Related to the Review of the European Union's Contribution to UNLD

- Comprehensive assessment of the state of literacy programmes in Europe;
- Development of an active website and database on existing literacy programmes by country (e.g. family literacy programmes, programmes in workplaces, communities and public spaces; ICT programmes; programmes for disadvantaged sectors); professional development programmes for literacy teachers/facilitators;
- Compilation of best practices that are linked to a common website.

D. On Networking and Sharing Of Practices

- Enhancing consultations with learners and their active participation in literacy program formulation and implementation;
- Forming a critical mass of committed literacy workers into a loose movement of literacy advocates in Europe;
- Strengthening networks among individuals, organizations and institutions working in similar programmes for the purpose of sharing experiences and organizing strong lobbies for particular advocacies (e.g. those in ICT/distance education; establishing a European Network of national organizations);
- Widely disseminating innovative practices (e.g. folk universities; ambassadors of literacy; study/reading circles, literacy training networks; the ICT programmes discussed in the Workshop);
- Contributing as a region to literacy efforts in other parts of the world.

To keep the fire burning until the literacy goals of Europe are met...

...All of the final Workshops identified UNESCO as the institution mandated to convene key actors to think through the concepts and actions/programmes implied by the identified challenges. Particularly, the UNESCO Institute for Education is identified as the institution most suited to compile the best literacy practices and disseminate them through a regional database that is accessible to the community of literacy workers.

